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Choosing Simplicity: A Commentary on the Bhikshuni Pratimoksha by Venerable Bhikshuni
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enlightened state (*sattva*). Whicher asserts that these inner states of the mind inform one's relationship to others and determine one's participation in the world. For example, as subtler levels are attained through progressive states of *samādhi*, what was once seen as separate from oneself becomes a part of one's own existence. This has moral ramifications in that the yogin is able to overcome selfish ego-motivated thoughts and actions and instead develop compassion, concentration, and other virtues.

Whicher also refutes the commonly held view that the text combines techniques and philosophies that do not fit together. Admittedly, the *Yoga-Sūtra* contains no fewer than twenty different techniques and four systems of yoga (*nīrodha*, *samādhi*, *kriyā*, and *astāṅga*). Whicher argues, however, that the text is "more self-contained and integrated than scholars assume" (p. 45). By choosing *nīrodha* as the foundational concept of the text, Whicher is able to present the *Yoga-Sūtra* as a unified whole. While Patañjali explores many different yogic disciplines, all lead, ultimately, to *nīrodha*. He understands YS 1.2 (*cittavṛttinīrodha*) not as cessation of the modifications of the mind, but as cessation of the *misidentification* with the modifications of the mind. This interpretation lends support to all of his theses—that *cittavṛttinīrodha* is both the process and goal of yoga, that this goal does not deny the world but embraces the world, and that *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* can exist in harmony with each other. The reason different methods are presented is because people come to yoga from different levels of preparedness. For example, one whose mindset is agitated, dull, or distracted is not ready to pursue purely mental disciplines, but must begin with the more active methods of *kriyā yoga*.

Since it was written, the *Yoga-Sūtra* has been considered the authoritative text on the theory-practice continuum that is known as yoga. With the global popularity of yoga in the twentieth century, the *Yoga-Sūtra* has become well known and is used as a reference text in many ashrams and centers for yoga instruction. For this reason, Whicher's elucidation of the text is relevant beyond the strictly academic sphere, although this wider audience may find the technical details cumbersome.

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Choosing Simplicity: A Commentary on the Bhikṣuṇī Pratimokṣa. By VENERABLE BHIKSHUNI MASTER WU YIN. Translated by BHIKSHUNI JENDY SHIH. Edited by BHIKSHUNI THUBTEN CHODRON. Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion, 2001. 338 pp. \$15.95 (paper).

In recent years, many publications that explain Buddhist philosophy and religious practice have appeared, but among them studies on Buddhist monasticism are quite rare. Works that describe the lived experience of a monastic, especially that of a nun, are even more rare. This book helps to fill the gap.

It is frequently assumed that the adaptation of Buddhism to fit our contemporary sensibilities will downplay the ancient renunciant ideal and replace it with a more suitable popular approach—one that is tailored for the urbane contemporary market. Yet traditionally in Buddhist cultures, the presence of monasteries is considered essential for the authentic establishment of Buddhism in a new land. *Choosing Simplicity* is a valuable resource for understanding why traditional Buddhists place such a high value on monasticism and how the monastic ideal is translated into practice.

The book is a commentary on the codes of discipline that regulate the daily life of a fully ordained Buddhist nun (*bhikṣuṇī*), based on oral presentations made by the

Taiwanese abbess *Bhikṣuṇī* Wu Yin to an audience of Western and Himalayan nuns and aspirants in Bodhgaya, India, in 1996.

The commentary is arranged in sixteen chapters. The first chapter explains the motivation required and the benefits that result from receiving monastic ordination. Subsequent chapters discuss the history of the monastic precepts, membership in the monastic order, the bimonthly recitation of precepts, the nature of the major transgressions, and the regulations related to meals, robes, lodging, and community life. The appendix contains a translation of the liturgy that begins and closes the ritual recitation of precepts. A glossary of relevant terms and list of books suggested for further reading complete the volume.

Like the seminar from which it originates, *Choosing Simplicity* is intended primarily for practitioners. In the voice of a dedicated monastic, Wu Yin explains the value of precepts for monitoring high standards of personal conduct, fostering communal harmony, and ensuring congenial relations with the lay community upon which monastics depend. To illustrate how individual precepts arose in response to specific situations, she relates stories from the Vinaya texts and explains the exceptional circumstances that are believed to have led to successive reformulations of the precepts. In uncluttered language, accessible to experts and lay audiences alike, she shares valuable insights on how successive generations of Chinese Buddhist monastics have been educated and trained. Then, based on her own many years of experience training Buddhist nuns in Taiwan, she gives practical examples to show how traditional monastic guidelines can be applied in contemporary society to accord with changing times and circumstances. She explains the prescribed rites for confessing and purifying transgressions of the precepts and the psychological benefits that are derived therefrom.

Some scholars will no doubt fault the book for its lack of theoretical analysis and its tendency to oversimplify. The fact that the book is arranged by topic, rather than by the sequence of the *Bhikṣuṇī Pratimokṣa*, makes it very readable; however, the absence of detailed annotation makes it difficult to cross-reference the commentary with the primary text, and commentary is not provided for every precept. It is instructive to place this book side by side with, say, Juo-Hsueh Shih's elaborately annotated *Controversies over Buddhist Nuns* (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 2000) to get a sense of the contrast between a philological analysis of the *Bhikṣuṇī Vinaya* and a practitioner's perspective on the same tradition. Despite its limitations, the book sheds light on a value system, legal code, and model of democratic communal organization that has endured for some 2,600 years.

As a record of women's struggle not only to achieve a life of self-discipline, but also to create harmonious independent religious communities of women, *Choosing Simplicity* is a pioneering work. By providing an insider's perspective on the challenges of being a Buddhist monastic and a woman, the book makes a valuable contribution to the fields of religious history, anthropology, ethics, and women's history.

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Disputed Mission: Jesuit Experiments and Brahmanical Knowledge in Seventeenth-Century India. By INES G. ŽUPANOV. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000. 277 pp. \$23.95 (cloth).

Researched on three continents and informed by careful readings of vast archival collections in several languages, *Disputed Mission* is the product of a most painstaking